

New England Annual Conference of United Methodist Church

Church and Society Committee

To Whom May It Concern;

Greetings and peace to you in the spirit of God who call all God's children beloved!

We write to you in sincere and earnest plea for passing of House Bill 6390 "An Act Concerning Access to the Postsecondary Education." The Church and Society Committee represents more than 100,000 United Methodists in New England.

The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God. *Leviticus 19, NRSV*

A call to love and stand with undocumented immigrants in our midst is a sacred mandate from God who called the people of Israel to love the aliens in their land as themselves. Undocumented immigrants are the very neighbors whom Jesus calls us to love as ourselves. Jesus even identified himself with an immigrant, probably an undocumented one if it applies to our time, when he said, "***When I was a stranger, you welcomed me.***" (Matt 25:35) The United Methodist Church affirms "**all persons, regardless of country of origin, as members of the family of God,**" and calls "**the Church and society to recognize the gifts, contributions, and struggles of those who are immigrants and to advocate for justice for all.**" (The Book of Discipline, 162.H) The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church urges our churches to welcome migrants, regardless of their legal status, into our community and the nation and to advocate for comprehensive immigration reform. (The 2008 Book of Resolutions 3281 "Welcoming the Migrants to the United States")

As people of God and United Methodists, we are deeply concerned about the lack of progress in passing comprehensive national immigration reform, which has pushed our immigrant brothers and sisters into the deeper shadows of our community. We reject the current "enforcement only" policy as it denies the human dignity of undocumented immigrants and breaks their families and lives apart.

We are especially concerned about the struggles of those young men and women who came to the United States as the children of undocumented immigrants. For them America is their country to love and their home in which to feel safe. They grew up working on their education with high hopes and dreams for their future just like all their friends in their schools, churches, and communities. However, their undocumented status closes every door to their future and their contributions in the only country they have known to live in and love.

The Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, legislation that would provide a pathway to citizenship for the children of the undocumented has been their only hope. The DREAM Act aims to create pathways to citizenship for immigrant children who were brought to this country before age 16, are under 30 years of age, and have lived here for a minimum of five years, and wish to attend college or join the military. The Congressional Budget Office recently released a report evaluating the latest version of the DREAM Act and found it would reduce deficits by \$1.4 billion between 2011 and 2020. The fortune 500 companies and the Department of Defense endorsed the DREAM Act as it is beneficial to both our economy and security. However, Congress failed the dreams of these children last December when the Senate failed to pass the bill by five votes. As a people of faith, we are deeply disappointed and yet still even more deeply committed in this dream of justice for the children of the undocumented immigrants.

Before they were children of the undocumented, they are the children of God whom God has given to us as gifts to be cherished and dreams to be fulfilled. We urge the good people of Connecticut to see these children as their own and pass HB 6390 not only for their sake but for all God's children's sake.

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